

# Editor's Note



n my overseas travels, I have often found myself trying to describe how large the United States is—usually when a person from another country has asked me if I know a particular American whom that person had met. Well, I haven't ever known the Americans in question because, invariably, they lived hundreds of miles away from me.

Those of our readers who have been to the United States can probably tell you how large this country is (it is the third largest country in the world, both in size and population)—even if they have seen only a small part of it or have confined their travel to its larger cities.

As a large country, the United States contains diverse regions with unique vegetation and natural landscapes. The mountains, lakes, hills, volcanoes, canyons, caves, deserts, waterfalls, and forests that characterize these regions are preserved, in part, by 58 national parks.

Sometimes overlooked by foreign visitors, national parks are popular destinations for Americans in search of affordable and inspiring vacations. In many national parks, visitors camp in tents or rent small cabins at a fraction of the cost of most hotels. Outdoor activities offered by the parks—such as hiking, swimming, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing—can be restful and restorative. And the scenery in most of the parks is spectacular.

An example of that scenery appears in the cover photo, which shows the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River in Yellowstone National Park—the first national park in the United States and the first park of its kind in the world. Besides waterfalls, Yellowstone Park contains many other natural wonders. One of the most famous is the geyser known as Old Faithful, so named because it erupts without fail approximately every 90 minutes. (A picture of Old Faithful appears on the title page of the feature article.)

The waterfalls and geysers of Yellowstone National Park are only some of the sights enjoyed by visitors to U.S. national parks. Take a look at the photos that accompany the feature article in this issue to see some of the other scenic wonders of the United States.

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